

## **Recognizing the Community of Tipton, Kansas**

Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the citizens of Tipton, Kansas for continuing efforts to sustain and revitalize their community.

Most communities in rural America would like to see future generations return home and keep alive its way of life. Tipton residents are no different. They want to provide the next generation the opportunity to continue the quality rural lifestyle the previous generation afforded them. The difference is that this community knows its future is in its hands. So they have volunteered these hands to construct what is needed to attract and retain the youth who, too often, leave for the "city";

In the summer of 2003, the parents and students of Tipton were faced with the impending consolidation of their elementary school - leaving the students with up to a 20 mile bus drive and the town with one less way to attract and retain businesses and the families they employ. Although the long drive would be taxing on the students and parents, convenience wasn't the catalyst for the action that was about to take place that summer. Mayor Adrian Arnoldy was among those who knew what losing the school would mean to Tipton. He told me, "Our parents faced the prospect of their children being enrolled in three different schools in three different towns. Losing our elementary school was not an option because we knew that as schools leave communities, so go the communities themselves."

Thinking ahead about the future effects of losing the elementary school, the town voted to create its own school - the Tipton Christian School, a private K-6 facility. Those committed hands of Tipton's residents worked together and completed the new school in less than two months with all volunteer labor. Private donations funded the cost of the new facility and continue to finance school operations to date. The construction and funding of a new school in 41 days is just one example of how this community stands up against the prevailing winds of consolidation and urbanization plaguing rural America. I can only imagine that the residents of Tipton will make sure this school succeeds in the same way Tipton Catholic Senior High School has since 1919.

During a period when small towns throughout the country have experienced the shuttered doors of a main street no longer able to keep customers in the shops, efforts like these have helped Tipton maintain an active business community. Hollerich Construction is an example of a business matching the commitment made by residents. The company has expanded its presence in Tipton, along with Great Plains Manufacturing who recently doubled the size of its agricultural equipment manufacturing plant.

Tipton residents have shown character, determination and the high value they place on family, friends and neighbors. It is their hope that these ideals will be an example to some of the troubled boys at the recently opened Tipton Academy, housed in the closed elementary school building. Boys who come to the academy are there to experience a different setting, a positive one. One way to do that is to have the boys involved in the community. They contributed to the construction of a kitchen, eating and serving area in the new community building that Tipton residents use for all sorts of community events and celebrations.

For rural communities to survive and prosper, citizens must be willing to create their own opportunities for success. Ongoing efforts to revitalize Tipton are an example of how hard work, vision and involvement can create just such an opportunity. Citizens throughout Kansas are working together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. Tipton is a developing success story that demonstrates how teamwork and creative thinking can make a positive difference in rural America.